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"THE FUTURE CHURCH" OF CHUNDER SEN AND ECUMENISM

Dr. Philip Chempakassery

EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Dr. Thomas Paul

THE APOSTLIC SUCCESSION OF THE CHURCH AND ECUMENISM

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THE MODERN VISION OF MAN AND ECUMENISM

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Manuscripts and Book Reviews are to be sent to:

The Managing Editor

CHRISTIAN ORIENT

P.B.No.1, Kottayam 686010

Tel: 0481 -2571807,2571809,2578319,2574594,2574596

Fax:91-481-2578525

E-mail: christorient@yahoo.co.in

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EDITORIAL

This issue of Christian Orient on Ecumenism brings to the readers a variety of thought-provoking articles which try to relate the question of ecumenism with many important issues of the present world. By this method, the authors are trying to keep our minds open to the various questions in connection with ecumenism.

The Churches were in fight against each other for many centuries. Perhaps the first division occurred with the condemnation of Arius in 325. But the position of Arius, the person condemned in the council of Nicaea, was too negative to be called Christian. He was denying the very divinity of Jesus and the Trinity of the Godhead. His heretical position did not stand long. Then came the heresy of Nestor. Though he is condemned as a heretic, the modern position of theologians is that Nestor was himself not a Nestorian. In other words the so-called Nestorian heresy was did not come from Nestor, but is the product of a wrong reading of Nestor and his followers. The council of Calcedon and the aftermath of it resulted in another group to drift away from the main stream Christianity. This trend continued in the council of Vatican I with the creation of the Old Catholics and Vatican II with a group preferring the old Latin form of the Roman liturgy. What is common in these divisions of Christians is that there is failure on both the parties concerned to understand the other party properly. There is the failure to harmonize the duty to truth and the obligation to love. When truth as understood by a group is over emphasized there is the inevitable result of failing in love. The consequence is division in the Church.

Let us think of the non-Calcedonians. They are often called monophysites. But are they really monophysites? Do they not believe that Jesus was a true man? If they are monophysites what is the justification for allowing marriages with these people. Now the Catholic Church permits marriages with the non-Calcedonians.

Heresy is a very subtle question. It depends very much on our understanding of the other party. If one wants to find heresy, one may be able to find it in almost every where.

Here, the problem is our failure to distinguish between truth and the form in which truth is expressed. Very often people identify these two or do not properly distinguish them from each other. Truth is not the form in which it is expressed. In the process of identification of truth and the form of it, many innocent people are misunderstood and condemned. It is a challenge which every Christian has to face- the challenge of distinguishing truth and the form.

Another important factor in the question of heresy and orthodoxy is the fight between the two commandments, the commandment of truthfulness and of love. God wants us to be truthful, holding only truth and speaking only truth. In our attempt to be truthful we try to be 100% correct in our doctrines. It is a virtue to be truthful. But truthfulness is not the only obligation laid on us. We have to love our brothers and sisters. In fact love is more emphasized in the NT than being truthful. Especially in the gospel of John Jesus' new commandment is the commandment of love. "Love one another

as I loved you", says Jesus. It does not mean that we can neglect the commandment of truthfulness. In fact Jesus identified himself with truth. He says, "I am the way, the truth and the life". Both are important, to be truthful and to be loving. How to keep the equilibrium? That is the challenge. There is virtue only where the equilibrium is kept. This issue of Christian Orient is all about keeping the equilibrium.

The first article is by Philip Chempakassery, who takes ideas from a prominent Indian writer and thinker, Keshub Chunder Sen on Church and spirituality. The importance of this Indian thinker is that he remains a strong inspiration of Indian Christian theologians to form a theology suited to the traditions of India and the Categories of the Indian people. In this first article, the author argues that many of the ideals for which Chunder Sen stood are important in the context of ecumenism. This Indian thinker is able to show us the direction in which we should move if ecumenism is a real priority for us.

The next article is by Sr. Unnata SIC. She considers ecumenism from the point of view of apostolic succession. Her main argument is that we have much more to think and articulate about the idea of apostolic succession because everything is not clear. One of the points on which the Protestants and Catholics disagree with each other is the question of apostolic succession. While the Catholic Church has an idea of personal succession received through the laying on of hands in priestly ordination and Episcopal consecration, the Protestants think of it more from the point of view of the Church as a quality of the Church which stands in relationship with the apostles because of holding the same faith. But both these positions need to be improved and both sides can move

closer; and the result will be closer relationship and cooperation.

The third article looks at the question of ecumenism from the modern philosophy. The author of the article, Raju Parukoor argues that the modern vision of man as expressed in the philosophy of the twentieth century sees him as a creature gifted with a vision of unity. The direction in which man moves is the direction of unity and integration. This is proved from the anthropological insights of four prominent philosopher of the last century. With this philosophical insight the author argues that division in the Christian Church is not only a sin against the founder of the Church but also against humanity.

The last article is a report of personal experience in the field of ecumenism. The author of the article, Sr. Namita SIC holds a doctorate in theology and is very active in the field of ecumenism. She conducts classes for Christians of diverse denominational affinity and gives spiritual direction for many people in different walks of life. From her experiences in actual involvement with Christians of different denominations she gives her opinions about how to go about in ecumenical activities.

It is hoped that this issue of Christian Orient has some thing important for its readers. The future of the Christian Church depends on how we succeed in keeping the commandment of love and how fast we move closer to each other. Any division is painful. Division in the Church, which is the body of Christ, is both painful and sinful. Let us move closer and save the future of Christianity.

Christian Orient wishes all its patrons, sponsors, subscribers and readers a Happy Christmas. May the Holy Babe of Bethlehem bless us all.

"THE FUTURE CHURCH" OF CHUNDER SEN AND ECUMENISM

Philip Chempakassery

"The Future Church" is a long article written by one of the most original Indian Christian Theologians who once exerted a very strong and deep influence in Indian minds. The author of the article Keshub Chunder Sen was once the object of worship for at least a group of his followers who considered him as an incarnation of God. He has contributed very substantially for Christian Theology. This is a time when the Indians speak of developing an Indian theology suited to the Indian mind set. In developing such a theology, one cannot set aside the great contributions made by this Indian thinker of the last century. Therefore it is relevant to think from his point of view when we speak of the branch of Christian theology known as ecumenism, because Sen was an ardent advocate of unity of all people of all faiths and doctrines. This paper is realized in three parts. First I would give a short biographical sketch of Sen because though he was a great man, he is not properly known to the average Christian readers in India and outside. Secondly I would give the main doctrines contained in his famous article "The Future Church". Finally I will suggest how to apply these doctrines in the field of ecumenism.

1. Keshub Chunder Sen

Keshub Chunder Sen was a man of the nineteenth century India when this country was

under British rule. He was very alive in the social and religious fields and gained many disciples besides many eminent friends both natives and foreigners. He was born on 19 November 1838. A town by name Colutolah in Culcutta was his native place. Piari Mohun and Sarada Devi were his parents. He belonged to one of the forward castes of the Indian population. It was the Vaidya Caste, more or less equal to the *Kshethriyas*. His parents were faithful Hindus of the *Vaishnava* blend. He lost his father at the age of ten and received education under the guidance of his paternal uncle. He was a self-confident and brilliant student but later events in the college affected him badly. After finishing college studies he worked in a Bank for sometime. When he was just a boy of 18 years he had to marry a girl child of just nine years. This shattered his vision of life and social and spiritual dedication. In his autobiography by name *Jeevan Veda* he speaks about the traumatic experience of his early marriage. He was unable to cope with the situation so much so that for many years he avoided his wife to settle his disturbed mind and to have a clear vision of life.

As a born leader and organizer he has able to gain a number of friends and admires. With these inborn talents he started many societies for the uplift of people both socially and spiritually. One of such early organizations he started was the Colutolah Evening School.

This was meant for the education of the boys belonging to the poor and working classes. He had the help of one of his close friends and some relatives. This was in 1857 and Chunder Sen was just 19 years old. This made him gain much appreciation in the society, especially from the poor classes. In the same year he started another movement called the British India Society. This society promoted discussions in science and literature. His English education and knowledge of the English language helped him much in serving the people attached to this society. The same years saw another organization by this extraordinary talented boy and it was Goodwill Fraternity. If we look at his organizations from his later religious and spiritual contributions to the human race, the most important society founded by him in his early years is this society, the Goodwill Fraternity. What was it? It was not meant primarily and directly for any social uplift of people or for any economic service to the society, but for purely religious and devotional purposes. Chunder Sen was slowly feeling dissatisfaction about his Hindu religious background. He was slowly moving out of the family traditions which were purely Hindu of the Vaishnava type. This new organization was more Christian than Hindu. Sen had very close intellectual friendship with many of the great Christian theologians of that time, especially protestant theologians. Already during the time of crisis engendered by the early marriage and unfavorable experiences in the college he had a close friend in the English Poet Edward Young. It is the Poem "Night

Thoughts" which attracted him much: The theme of the Poem is the Christian victory over disturbing thoughts of death. About the great consolation he received from this poem he speaks in his¹ book called *Jeevan Veda*. In Goodwill Fraternity Keshub gave classes on religion and spirituality following the writings of great protestant theologians of that time. Chunder Sen had gained close friendship with some of the leading protestant missionaries in India. T. M. Burns, C. H. A. Dall etc are some of these missionaries who influenced the philosophy of Sen. Among the theologians whom he considered great, the name of Theodore Parker deserves first place. But these contacts and friendship did not succeed in converting him to Christianity or to form an orderly theological vision.

The same year another important event took place. It was his membership in the Brahmo Samaj. This was the result of his contacts with the Brahma Samaj Literature, especially a series of leaflets entitled "What is Brahmoism"? by Rajnarain Bose. The idea of God and religion presented in these booklets were similar to his own convictions in many respects. Therefore Sen thought of joining the Samaj. But his Goodwill Fraternity continued for some more time and he continued to give classes in religion in the fraternity in spite of his membership in the Samaj. But after two years the Fraternity merged with the Samaj. During this time Keshub developed a close friendship with the Samaj leader Debendranath-Tagore. From Debendranath's part, the new comer was appreciated much

1. K. C. Sen, *Jeevan Veda or the Scripture of life* (tr) P. S. Basu, Calcutta, 1940, P.6.

Jeevan Veda is collection of lectures which Keshub delivered to the public on spiritual and religious matters in 1882. These lectures have not only theological and spiritual depth, but also biographical value.

and looked at with much expectation. Debendranath found in the young man the future leader of the Samaj.

Two years later, that is, in 1859, another organization was begun. It was known as *Brahma Vidyalaya*. It was a sort of school of theology in which Keshub was the main lecturer. New organizations continued to come up. One of such organizations was the Sangat Sabha which was formed in 1860. It was something like a Church, especially a Protestant Church or more precisely a Methodist Church. This was Keshub's main pulpit to preach his ideals in religious and spiritual thoughts. The influence of Keshub made changes in Debendranath's thinking also. During this time Keshub published some booklets. They were known as "Tracts for the Times". The first tract was especially important as an introduction to his programme of spiritual and social life. It was entitled *Young Bengal: This is for you*. In this tract he invited the young people to follow a spiritual life and attain self-fulfillment by serving the poor. This was practically a Christian idea of spirituality. Later in 1861 Keshub started a weakly News Paper by name *Indian Mirror*. This paper also was a powerful means for the spreading of his opinions on social and religious life.

As he was rising in popular opinion and as he continued to insist on his views and opinions, there was mounting opposition to him in the Brahmo Samaj. In the mean time he undertook a visit to Krishnanagar, an important centre of learning and philosophical activities in Bengal. He used this interval away from the Samaj for gaining friendship with some of the most eminent Indian and foreign thinkers.

After his return from the study tour the atmosphere in the Brahma Samaj was anything but amicable. His absence was cunningly used for hatching disagreement and hatred against him. A natural calamity added oil to the rising fire of disagreement. There was a fierce storm which destroyed the Samaj building and as a result the services had to be conducted in Devendranath's house. During this time some people wearing the sacred thread were allowed to officiate at the services. As a result there was a drift in the society and Keshub and Devendranath had to part company. This meant that Keshub at the age of merely 28 yrs had to shoulder the leadership of a group by himself. His followers were strong and a little too progressive. Therefore there was no possibility for reconciliation with the separated group; so he had to go on with the new freedom which he gained through the separation. He started a missionary endeavor to spread his ideology. One of the most important events of this time was a lecture which he gave in 1886 May on "*Jesus Christ. Europe and Asia*". This lecture brought to light Keshub's passionate love and appreciation for Jesus, the founder of Christianity. But the result was mounting opposition from many quarters in Hinduism and also from the Christian missionaries who were not able to appreciate the ideas coming from a non- professed Christian. During this time Keshub used to qualify himself as *Yesudas*, the slave of Jesus. In his lecture, he qualified Jesus in the following words.

Jesus is identical with self-sacrifice and as he lived and preached in the past of time so must he be preached in the future of time.

The more is sacrifice needed in India, and the more it is made the more will Jesus find a home in the land².

With these words about Jesus he also added, "I am therefore patiently waiting that I may grow with the age and the nation and the spirit of Christian sacrifice may grow therewith."³

Later Keshub started missionary tours to different parts of India. Many people especially Hindus understood it as a new *bhakti* movement and received these lectures with cries of joy and also with the lamentations of sorrow for their sins. Some people even identified Keshub as a new avatara of God and titles like Lord, Master, Saviour and so on were showered on him. It had its negative effects also. Some of the educated people misunderstood Keshub as encouraging the people to give him these titles and Keshub's intentions were nothing short of making himself a God.

Later in 1870 he undertook a lector tour to Britain. He was already a friend of many English men and his eloquence was well known to the people and this tour created many misgivings in the minds of his audience. Why should a non-baptized person speak about Christ? Is his attempts Christian or Hindu? In other words is he trying to spread Hindu religion- may be a new form of it – or a new form of Christianity? What is his right to preach on Christ? These were some of the questions which precipitated in the minds of

confused Christians. This tour had its important impact in the mind of Keshub himself. It seems he undertook the tour with very high expectations about the English Christians. But the type of people whom he met there disappointed him. Keshub returned from Britain with less enthusiasm for Christianity in general and for the English Christians is particular

As time passed Keshub was becoming mature in his spiritual and religious thoughts. A new form of this spiritual idea is visible in the phrase 'new dispensation' which he was using frequently in this period. Keshub was having the idea that India is heading towards a new phase in its spiritual life. The country and its people, he thought, were being granted a new obligation to be the torch bearers of the future of spiritual life. Though his appreciation for Christ has not grown any weaker his enthusiasm for Christianity seems to have paralyzed during this period.

A new controversy originated by the marriage of his daughter at an age lower than the age prescribed by the Indian law. It seems that Keshub understood it just as a betrothal with the view that when the bride and bridegroom reach the prescribed age they might be united as wife and husband. But what he thought of as a betrothal was understood by the public as a real marriage.

Nabavidhan was the name he gave to his association. It may be translated as 'new dispensation'. It was always qualified as a

2. P.C. Mozoomdar, *The Life and Teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen*, Cacutta, Navavidhan Trust, 3rd Ed, 1931, p. 114

3. P.C. Mozoomdar, op. cit. pp 114-115

Church and the services in it had similarities with the services in the protestant Churches. It had imbibed many of the progressive social and religious ideas of Christianity. It had also elements of a universal religious ideal which sees all the religious leaders and founders as equal in dignity and deserving equal honour from the devotees. Yet it was not a Church as such.

His life came to an end in 1884. Already by the end of 1883 he had to cut down much of his religious and spiritual activities because of his ill health. He had already constructed a domestic Church which he called *Devalaya* and he himself blessed it as the last public act in 1884. He died in 1884 and his body was cremated according to the rituals of his new dispensation. With the death of Keshub his new dispensation also got disintegrated through internal strife. But the personality of Keshub remains unique and greatly wonderful. He had a message which is relevant to all thinking people. He has something to say about ecumenism also and that is what interests us in this paper.

2. "The Future Church" and Ecumenism

"The Future Church" is a speech in which Keshub Chunder Sen summarizes almost all his ideas about the Church or any spiritual organization. Some of the main points which are of interest to any spiritual thinker may be summarized as follows:

1. Frustration with the idea of infallibility and the hope of a solution.

Keshub understands that the claim of established Churches about their infallibility is increasingly being questioned by the new generation of spiritual thinking. The idea of infallibility had a positive quality in it. The association or organization which claimed infallibility used it as a cover against criticisms and questioning. But the modern spirit is against accepting such claims. This new trend is not also capable of providing an acceptable alternative. There is confusion and perplexity in the minds of people. There is an increase of new sects coming up with their own ideas which are opposed to each other. In this situation of confusion men of good will are looking forward to "The Church of the future". To quote his own words.

The infallibility of established Churches has been disputed; and amidst the confusion and perplexity of countless and multiplying sects men are anxiously looking forward to and speculating about the ... Church of the future, wherein they hope to find faith and peace⁴.

2. The harmonizing of the past with the future.

In many of the forms of Christianity there is an exclusive stress on the positive aspects of the present with neglect of the future. This makes the Church as a museum rather than a project for the future. It would be in place to site an important verse from Keshub.

4. D.C. Scott (ed), *Keshub Chunder Sen*, Bangalore (India), Christian Literature Society, 1974, p. 101

It is beginning to be felt that the past can't be the ruler of the present, and the theology of the present day must give way to something higher and better, and in keeping with the advanced state of men's intelligence... It is therefore necessary for every believer to be assured that the Church to which he belongs has not only a glorious past, but also a glorious future... It is to be regretted that speculations about the future Church generally contained more of poetry than philosophy and show more of what men wish than what facts warranted⁵.

Christianity was glorious in its past especially in the person of the incarnate son of God. It is sufficiently justified because of the fact that it is a unique event in the history of man, an event which can't be repeated, which can't be superceded, which can't lose its importance in any way. It is true that Christianity has to derive all its energy and inspiration from this great event in history. At the same time the way this event is understood and believed and presented gives the impression that Christianity is a backward looking movement. It is true also that the Christian Church looks forward to the final glorious coming of the Son of man at the end of times. But it is a trans- historical fact. In other wards in the past there is an event which is very much down to earth, an event which is part and parcel of human history. But the future we hope for something that is beyond history. But the question that comes up in the minds of those who are very practical

is "what is the historical goal to which the Church is moving forward". Is there a historical future which balances with the historical past? When all our preaching and writings look backward to the Christ event, are we sufficiently conscious of the fact that history has a future also? I think, there is lack of balancing between the past and future in the theology of the established Churches especially in the Catholic and eastern Churches.

One of the reasons why some people reject the Church is that the Church has almost no message for the present and future.

3. The one-sidedness of the human thinking

We will discuss this point with a quotation from Keshub Sen's lecture on Future Church. He says, There are two opposite and antithetical ideas in the minds which always struggle with each other in the history of individuals and nations. When indifference or disgust drives the mind from the one he is generally impelled towards the other. Men seldom pursue the golden mean of truth in which the true are harmonized... should any cherished idea through after a time disagree, erroneous or Mischievous they not only renounce it and hate it, but with the zeal of renegades rush impetuously to its opposite extreme⁶.

Is not this observation of Keshub true about the Church? The history of the Churches is that each Church has exaggerated the point on which it disagrees with the other

5 D.C. Scott, op.cit. 101-102

6 D.C. Scott, op.cit. 103

Churches. The history of Catholicism or the Roman Latin form of it in particular is that it moved far away from the Greek Orthodox tradition after the great schism of 1054. The same thing happened also the history of the Greek Orthodox Church. It was overstressing those elements which it had as its unique possession. The protestant Churches which started with the revolution of Luther were attacking the institutional establishment of the Catholic Church. In the criticism of the establishment they also questioned the sacraments and especially the priesthood and leadership in the Church. Here also we can find a sort of absolutization or an one-sided view. If all the Churches make an examination of conscience of their own separate base after the division, each will realize that there is undue over-stress on unimportant points. The way back to unity is a realization of this unwarranted absolutisation.

4. The mind, matter and God

Keshub Chunder Sen understands that there are only three "elementary and fundamental" ideas which are discussed in any theology. According to him these three are the mind, the matter and God. The dangers in theological speculation are the results of overemphasis given to the mind or the matter over against God. He understands that the undue importance attached to the human mind results in saying "I am God". It is true that human mind is a mystery in itself, an unfathomable mystery. The ways in which the human mind functions remain unknown to man even to this day after the so many researches conducted in the field of psychology. The powers of the mind are also

beyond the comprehension of man. It transcends the limitations of matter. It is not bound by time or space. This wonderful nature of the mind gives rise to the identification of man with God.

The second error is the over emphasis given to matter. The beautiful moon always remains an attraction to the human mind. The heat and light which man receives from the sun generate a sense of amazement. These attitudes, unless properly checked, will fall into idolatry, the worship of these objects as the creator.

Both these trends have their traces in the devotions of the established Churches. It is not to say that mind is identified with God or that matter is worshiped. But there are certain behaviors, which at least gives the impression to the outsider that idolatry (worship of matter) and man worship are happening in the established Churches. It is true about the Catholic Church and Eastern Churches which honor their past leaders, their saints, and departed bishops and so on. It is always necessary that proper control is exercised in this regard. It is not enough that the Church maintains true faith and avoids any man worship. But it is also important that the Church shows the outsider that no exaggeration is happening.

The attitude of many faithful of the established Churches gives the impression that they are not able to distinguish between matter and the creator. The importance given to certain places and times and to certain things like the relics of saints, gives the impression that idolatry is practiced in the Church. When we speak of ecumenism, of the close of

collaboration among the Churches with the aim of total visible unity, the Churches have to subject themselves to a thorough self examination and avoid all types of exaggeration. When the evils of matter worship and man worship is avoided and the one God alone is given true worship outwardly and inwardly avoiding all impressions to the contrary there will be true harmony of matter, spirit and God. "In this harmony" says Keshub

I believe will all the struggles and wrangling between contending systems of worship ultimately end. Thus shall all Churches blend together in the Church of the one True God, and the false deities they now worship shall be reduced to a beautiful created trinity Subordinate to the Highest Divine unity of the Creator⁷.

The Trinity which Keshub speaks about is not the divine Trinity of the Christian faith. It is a created Trinity. In other words it is a harmonious blending of the matter and spirit under the creator. The trinity here does not mean that they are three. The number is not important. What is important for the created things and persons is harmony without infringing the supremacy of the Creator.

5. The worship of the Future church

According to Keshub Sen the highest worship is the service of Love. A serious study of the gospels has brought him to the conclusion that loving God and follow creatures is the highest service which any man is expected to do. In true devotion and humble submission to the teaching of Jesus Sen writes.

When that immortal Son of God, Jesus was asked by one of his disciples to explain the divine commandments, he said: 'love thy God thy Lord with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength; and 'love the neighbour as thyself'. 'This', he added, 'is the whole law and prophets'. Never has the essence of true religion being so simply and exhaustively expounded... they constitute the primary code of divine jurisprudence; the fundamental principles of ethics and religion⁸.

Keshub's idea is that worship and ethics can't be separated. Ethics has to be the worship and worship has to be true ethics. There is always a tension between worship and ethics. It is evident in the history of the Church. In the fight against heterodoxy the primary Christian moral principle of love. The speedy progress in ecumenism depends on our success in blending orthodoxy with orthopraxis.

6. The Gospel of the Future Church

Close to the idea of the blending of orthodoxy and orthopraxis is the idea of recognition of the mercy of God. Chunder Sen makes this the gospel of the future Church. To the question about the Gospel of the *Future Church* Chunder Sen responds in the following way.

I answer: the Gospel of God's infinite mercy. What else do we sinners need for our salvation, but to be assured of his saving mercy? Hope you of a God of absolute holiness and purity? The more I think and recoil from his awful majority... I can't as a

D.C.Scott. op. cit. 110

D.C.Scott, op.cit.111

sinner venture to stand in His presence... But behold, there is mercy in the Holy God... oh! How refreshing and encouraging is this thought to us!⁹

Though Sen shows a slanting towards the Protestantism of Karl Barth and Bonhoeffer of the early 20th century in essence he is truly biblical. We can understand Sen's mercy as almost the same as the grace in the letters of Paul. We are saved by grace or in other words we are saved by faith in the infinite grace of God. In the complicated and sophisticated theologies of the Churches the simple truth of grace is very often shrouded in unintelligible technical terms. The result is that God is distanced from the heart of man and people are separated from one another. Is not there the ignorance of the infinite mercy of God behind the quarrels among the Churches?

Conclusion

Chunder Sen was not a Christian in the technical sense in which the word is understood today. At the sometime he understood himself as a Christian, as a disciple of Jesus. For this

discipleship he was hated by all his family leading a life of tension because of the opposition from orthodox Hindus, his own family members and also from the missionary of the established Churches. In the midst of all these continued his faith and allegiant to Jesus of Nazareth. He was a true thinker, a religious thinker for that matter. But it was not any religion that he was concerned about but the religion of following Jesus. He was not become a member of any of the established Churches of his time. But his own movement was a Church. When we consider as Christians the members of the Salvation Army who have no faith in baptism, the many forms of Pentecostalism having opposing stand about all the fundamentals of the Christian faith the new groups of post-modern Christians, are we not justified to give some sort of ecclesial nature to the movement of Chunder Sen? If we are correct in thinking that way should we not take his suggestion for the one, true Church of the future with due respect and seriousness? Yes. Sen has a lesson for the Churches, for ecumenism, and that is very practical and down to earth.



⁹ D.C. Scott, op.cit. 114

EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Thomas Paul

Christian spirituality, which is not related with the Holy Eucharist, is like a Gospel without Christ. It can be easily seen everywhere that even the average Christians orientate their life to the Holy Eucharist. During Eucharistic processions most Christians make a public manifestation of their faith in the Eucharistic Lord. Often the non-Christians also join in some way the public adoration of the Eucharist with manifest devotion. From the very beginning the Church gave centrality of importance in her life to the Holy Eucharist. When the believers of the apostolic times assembled, they experienced their new-formed brotherhood and prepared themselves with prayers and studying the teachings of the apostles for the main activity, namely the breaking of the bread (this is the first name given to the Eucharistic celebration). From the day of Pentecost, says the second Vatican Council, "the Church has never failed to come together to celebrate the paschal mystery: reading 'in all scriptures the things referring to himself' celebrating the Eucharist in which 'the victory and triumph of his death are again made present, and at the same time giving thanks for the unspeakable gift' in Christ Jesus, 'to the praise of his glory' through the power of the Holy Spirit'.¹ Here we find a general

description of the spiritual life of the Christians. The importance of the Holy Eucharist in Christian life can never be exaggerated. It is the "very heartbeat" of the Christian community². There had been innumerable studies on the meaning of the Holy Eucharist and its place in Christian life. But there still remain many unseen aspects and unfathomable depths of its importance in our life. In fact, "God alone can teach us the significance of the Eucharist and help us understand its mystery"³.

Taking the advice of St. John Chrysostom, Pope Paul VI tells us, "We must approach this mystery in particular with humility and reverence, not relying on human reasoning, which ought to hold its peace, but rather adhering firmly to divine revelation"⁴. Our attempt to understand the Holy Eucharist must be on our knees than desk. A little child devoutly kneeling before the Holy Eucharist, may grasp its meaning better than an astute philosopher who studies it only intellectually.

Different Aspects of Eucharistic Spirituality

Pope John Paul II shows that the Eucharist is at one and the same time, 1) a sacrament of the presence of Christ; 2) a

1 Second Vatican Council, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, n. 6.

2 Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, n. 5.

3 Cf. Ibid.

4 *Mysterium Fidei*, (September, 3, 1965) n. 16.

sacrament of the sacrifice of Christ; and 3) a sacrament of the communion with Christ⁵. When we live the Eucharistic spirituality at these levels, our life becomes a life of thanksgiving and we begin to enjoy already here on earth the future glory. Pope John Paul II has clearly shown that in every Eucharistic celebration the Mother of Jesus is certainly present. It implies that Eucharistic spirituality is a life with Holy Virgin Mary. We need to look into these different aspects of the Eucharistic spirituality.

Christ's Real Presence and the Spiritual Dimension

When we speak of Eucharistic spirituality, the picture that usually comes to our mind is that of a devout Christian who regularly attends the Holy Mass and receives the Holy Communion, who is always on his knees during the Eucharistic Benediction and prostration and spends hours on knees before the Holy Eucharist. Eucharistic spirituality is commonly identified with manifestations of devotion and piety before the Holy Eucharist, such as beautiful decorations of the Eucharistic Altar, melodious songs before the Holy Sacrament and kneeling devoutly before the Holy Eucharist. No one can deny that these are truly spiritual activities and they do help the spiritual growth of the soul very much.

Martin Luther does not seem to believe in the continued real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist after the celebration. Presence

of Christ, according to him was realized only in the eating of the consecrated bread with committed faith during the celebration of the Eucharist. He argues that during the Last Supper Jesus asked the Apostles to "take and eat" the bread which he gave them and not 'take and adore' it. Therefore adoration of the Holy Eucharist is an anomaly and an aberration of real Christian piety, he feels.

It is true that we cannot restrict the whole Eucharistic spirituality only to these devotions. It does not however exclude them in any way. Pope Pius XII tells us that these devotions help spiritual growth and increase of faith. He points out, "It was from the practice of preserving the Blessed Sacrament for the sick and dying that we began keeping the sacrament in the church and venerating it."⁶ "This tradition of adoration is theologically founded on the doctrine that Eucharist is both a sacrifice and sacrament at the same time. The uniqueness of the Eucharistic sacrament consists of the fact that it is not only graceful but that the offerer and the offered are one and the same. That is why the Church teaches us to be Eucharistic devotional and prayerful. She expresses the faith in her divine Bridegroom who is present In the Eucharist. Thereby the Church gives thanks to Him⁷.

Certainly the primary intention of Jesus in founding the sacrament of Eucharist was that his followers should eat his body and drink his blood. The council of Trent confirms,

⁵ *Redemptor Hominis*, n.17.

⁶ Cf. *Mediator Dei*, n. 131ff.

⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 131.

“Eucharist was founded to be used”⁸. Jesus demanded that whoever did not want to eat his body and drink his blood should depart from him (Jn. 6, 67).

This does not mean that Jesus who is really present in the Eucharist need not be adored. It is the right and responsibility of humans and angels to worship him wherever he is really present, in Bethlehem, on mount Tabor, on the cross, in Heaven or in the Eucharist. When God sent his Son to the earth he wished that even the angels worship him.

The early Christians easily understood the meaning of the Eucharistic presence of Jesus and the way to realize it in their lives. They believed that the Eucharist was the continued presence of the glory they had beheld, “glory as of the only Son from the Father”, the Word made flesh and dwelt among them, full of grace and truth (Jn.1, 14). It had to be sacramental to compromise with the changing times and cultures. Being sacramental, it does not lose any of its essential features. Therefore men and angels are expected to worship him in the Eucharist till the end of the world.

The early Christians organized their life and habits around this centre. St. Justin, who was martyred in 165 A.D. records that the Christians came together every Sunday for the breaking of the bread. The deacons preserved the consecrated bread for those who were unable to participate in the Eucharistic

celebration. They had taken maximum care that any insect may not eat up the consecrated bread. Extreme care was taken not to lose even a tiny particle of the Eucharistic bread, witnesses St. Hypolitus of Rome⁹. This is the beginning of the devotional practices before the Eucharist. The variety in the devotional manifestation is the contribution of time and culture. At the centre of all such devotions was the firm faith in the real presence of the risen Christ in the Eucharist.

Adoration of the Holy Eucharist

The first Christians believed that Jesus Christ was really present during the celebration. Therefore the Eucharistic celebration was considered very holy. This is clearly seen from the name given to the Eucharistic celebration by St. Paul: “Lord’s Supper” (1 Cor. 11, 20). Although Eucharist was instituted primarily to be consumed by the faithful¹⁰, the faith in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist spontaneously inspired them to offer worship before it. When St. Luke refers to the splendour of lights during the breaking of the bread in the Christian assembly at Troas, he was also indicating the adoring attitude of that first Christian community.

Preservation of the Holy Eucharistic bread was originally inspired by the desire that the sick Christians who could not come for the celebration may also get the benefit of the Eucharistic celebration. Although they could

8 Cf. DS. 1643.

9 *Apostolic Tradition*, 37.

10 The Council of Trent, Cf. D.S1643

not see the visible and physical proximity, they felt intensely personal presence of the risen Lord. Personal presence evokes a loving response at least by recognition and acceptance of it through some kind of external expression. St. Augustine tells us that it would be a sin to receive the Holy Eucharist without adoring it¹¹.

The first manifestation was by keeping a lighted candle or lamp near the preserved Eucharist. This implies that the Eucharistic spirituality began in the context of personal relationship with Jesus Christ, who has suffered, died and is risen for us.

The presence of Jesus inspired feelings of great reverence for him. Therefore they thought that the Eucharist deserves a better place than what is available in an ordinary home atmosphere. Thus from the ninth century onwards the Christians began to keep the Eucharist on the altar in a church. Later it was shifted to the tabernacle prepared behind the altar.

In all religions altar is the place where we closely face God. It is a holy place. It reminds us of the highest possibility of human existence, as Karl Rahner pointed out¹². In the Syro-Malabar Liturgy altar is described as the most awe-inspiring "place of encountering the Lord face to face". Therefore altar was considered an appropriate place to preserve the Holy Eucharist. It reminded the faithful that the sacrifice offered by Christ on Calvary is made present in our lives. The community

of believers could experience and witness the proximity of the risen Lord sitting at the right hand of the Father. This awareness of the living presence of Jesus with us led to the development of a variety of Eucharist-centred devotional practices, personal and communitarian.

All the same it must be admitted that most of the present-day Eucharistic devotions began only in the Middle Ages as a response of certain Eucharistic heresies, which came up in the Christian West. From the day of Pentecost, the Christians accepted the real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist as self-evident. No one doubted it. Naturally they did not know how to explain that Eucharist is at the same time sign and reality of the real presence of Christ. Towards the middle of the ninth century, Paschasius Radbertus who was a pious monk of the Benedictine Abbey of Corbie (+860) emphasized too much the bodily and natural aspects of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Against this Ratramnus (+ after 868) of the same Abbey over emphasized the sign aspect in the Eucharist. The Church rejected both these explanations.

Real problems began when two centuries later Berengar of the Episcopal School of Tours (+1088) began to argue that there was only a symbolic presence of Christ in the Eucharist and his real presence was only in heaven. The Church condemned immediately Berengar and his teaching in two Roman

11 Cf. PL.37: 1264,n.9.

12 Cf. Raymond A Tartre(Ed.), *The Eucharist Today*, (New York),199.

Councils (in 1059 and 1079)¹³. A mere condemnation was only like a first aid. There was the need for further scientific study and clear official teaching regarding the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Great theologians like Hugo of St. Victor (+1141), Peter Lombard (+1160), St. Albert the great (+1280) and St Thomas Aquinas (+1274) could show conclusively that Berengar was theologically untenable.

Meanwhile the Church began to teach in unmistakable terms the faith of the Church in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist¹⁴. The mind of the Church is best expressed by the Council of Trent: "The Holy Council teaches and openly and straightforwardly professes that in the blessed sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, after the consecration of the bread and wine, our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is truly, really and substantially contained under the appearances of those perceptible realities"¹⁵.

The spontaneous response of the ordinary Christian faithful was public expression of their faith in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist. All the public devotions of the Holy Eucharist as we

know and practise them today especially in the Christian West is different form of this response. A new custom of raising the Eucharistic bread immediately after the consecration was introduced in the twelfth century in France. This was well accepted by the faithful. Later raising of consecrated wine was also introduced. If a sick person could not receive the Holy Eucharist for any reason, then it was kept for few moments raised before the person so that he could see and worship Jesus Christ. So also they began to touch the lips of a dead person with the Holy Eucharist if he could not receive it before death for some reason and take it away. The faithful began to think that the essence of the Eucharistic celebration was in seeing it. They wanted that the priest may keep it raised as long he could, so that they could see it for longer time. When the priest eventually brought it down they even left the church, because they believed that the sum and substance of the Eucharistic devotion was seeing the Eucharist.

Through the efforts of Blessed Juliana (1193-1258) a special feast for the Holy Eucharist was established in the diocese of

13 Berengar retracted his teaching and declared his faith in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist: "I, Berengarius, believe in my heart and confess with my lips that the bread and wine which are placed on the altar are, by the mystery of the sacred prayer and the words of the Redeemer, substantially changed into the true and proper and life-giving body and blood of Jesus Christ our Lord; and that, after consecration, they are true body, which was born of the Virgin and hung on the cross, being offered for the salvation of the world, and which sits at the right hand off the Father; and Christ's true blood, which was poured forth from his side" (Cf. Neuner-Dupuis, *Christian Faith*, n. 1501).

14 The two councils of Rome, Lateran IV, Council of Florence, council of Trent and Vatican II as well as many Popes taught explicitly this faith.

15 *The Christian Faith*, n.1513

Liege in Belgium. In 1264 Pope Urban IV declared the feast of Corpus Christi as a feast of the universal Church. A few years later Pope Clement V promoted Eucharistic procession on this feast day. That reminded the faithful how Jesus was moving about from village to village.

The desire to experience Eucharistic Jesus led to the development of a variety of other devotions. Adoring Jesus in the Eucharist visibly placed in a transparent monstrance on a high pedestal was begun towards the end of the fourteenth century¹⁶. Perhaps the most popular form of Eucharistic devotion is the 40 hours adoration promoted by Charles Borromeo (1538-1584). It reminds us of the 40 hours Jesus spent in his tomb. Other devotions also came up, like the holy hour, 13 hours adoration, and rosary and novena before the exposed Blessed Sacrament. Finally some pious priests started perpetual Eucharistic adoration in some churches. This was a great success in terms of the people who turned out for adoration. This inspired the Church to institute religious congregation for the perpetual adoration of the Holy Eucharist. Their main charism is Eucharistic life. St. Alphons Maria Di Liguori (1696-1787) promoted private visits to the Blessed Sacrament. Spiritual communion was another form of Eucharistic devotion. Those who could not receive the Holy Eucharist physically

expressed their desire to do so in a spiritual manner. All these prompted the Church to begin international Eucharistic congresses. The first of these was in Lille in France in 1881 under Pope Leo XIII. Until now there were 48 international Eucharistic congresses. The last was in Mexico in October 2004.

All these exercises of Eucharistic piety proved to be very beneficial for the Christian perfection. The council of Trent teaches that the Holy Eucharist may be exposed for public worship and be solemnly carried in procession for adoration that can be offered only to God¹⁷. Pope Pius XII: It was from the practice of preserving the Blessed Sacrament for the sick and the dying that we began keeping the sacrament in the church and venerating it. "This tradition of adoration is theologically founded on the doctrine that Eucharist is both a sacrifice and sacrament at the same time. The uniqueness of the Eucharistic sacrament consists of the fact that it is not only graceful but that the offerer and the offered are one and the same. That is why the Church teaches us to be eucharistically devotional and prayerful. She expresses her faith in her divine Bridegroom who is present in the Eucharist. Thereby¹⁸ the Church gives thanks to Him". St John Maria Vianney, the best model for all priests, used to ask: When Jesus Christ the Lord loves us so much, should we not respond to his love?¹⁹ Pope John Paul II teaches: "Adoration

16 The first transparent monstrance is dated 1395

17 Cf. Neuner-Dupuis, *Christian Faith*, n.1531

18 *Mediator Dei*, n.131.

19 *Sacerdotii Nostri*, n.46.

of Christ in this Sacrament of love must also find expression *in various forms of Eucharistic devotion*: personal prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, hours of adoration, periods of exposition—short, prolonged and annual (Forty Hours)—Eucharistic Benediction, Eucharistic processions, Eucharistic congresses.... The Church and the world have a great need of Eucharistic worship. Jesus waits for us in this Sacrament of love. Let us be generous with our time in going to meet him in adoration and in contemplation that is full of faith and ready to make reparation for the great faults and crimes of the world. May our adoration never cease”²⁰. About the Eucharistic year he says: “During this year *Eucharistic adoration outside Mass* should become a particular commitment for individual parish and religious communities. Let us take time to kneel before Jesus present in the Eucharist, in order to make reparation by our faith and love for acts of carelessness and neglect, and even the insults which our Saviour must endure in many parts of the world”²¹.

These devotional practices, which were developed in the aftermath of denial of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, have helped the faithful to deepen their faith in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. But at

closer study it can be seen that the Eucharistic spirituality is much deeper than these practices, which all remain at the “*darsana*” level. Eucharistic piety was often mistaken for better decoration of the Eucharistic altar and more melodious songs. Hence whole attention was given for decoration, illumination and melody of songs. Eucharistic spirituality really demands from us joining with Christ in his sacrifice and building up the unity he began.

Sacrificial Life

“The Eucharist is above all else a sacrifice. It is the sacrifice of the Redemption and also the sacrifice of the New Covenant”, teaches Pope John Paul II²². This is the traditional teaching of the Church²³. Fathers of the Church like St. Cyprian, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Augustine witness to this traditional faith.

Pope John Paul II points out in this context the primary form of Eucharistic spirituality; “In fact, in that celebration there is expressed, in a more direct way the worship of the Eucharist”²⁴. The Holy Father also points out, “Eucharistic worship matures and grows when the words of the Eucharistic prayer, especially the words of consecration, spoken with great humility and simplicity, in a

20 *Dominicae Cena*, n.3.

21 *Stay with us*, Lord. N.18.

22 Cf. *Dominicae Cena*, n. 9.

23 Council of Trent, teaches: “In this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of his cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner ... For the victim is one and the same : the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different” (*Christian Faith* n.1548) Cf also DS, 1751. Second Vatican, n.47; *Lumen Gentium*, n.3,28.

24 Cf. *Dominicae Cena*, n. 7.

worthy and fitting way, which is understandable and in keeping with their holiness; when this essential act of Eucharistic liturgy is performed unhurriedly; and when it brings about in us such recollection and devotion that the participants become aware of the greatness of the mystery being accomplished and show it by their attitude"²⁵.

The sacrificial nature of the Eucharist brings with it many responsibilities for its minister. The Eucharist altar is the table of the words of God and at the same time, table of the Word of God, that is, of the body and blood of Christ. Hence the minister must always use only the sacred Scripture for the readings in the celebration; he must also examine not only his heart but also his actions and words at the altar; any thing that lacks respect for the mystery must be avoided. Using only the approved liturgical text and vestments and observing the rules will "avoid harmful individualism". The minister must certainly manifest a sense of faith in his celebration. Pope John Paul II has this important request to all priests: "If the only result of this (Eucharistic) Year were the revival in all Christian communities of the celebration of Sunday Mass and an increase in Eucharistic worship outside Mass, this Year of grace would be abundantly successful. At the same time, it is good to aim high, and not to be content with mediocrity, since we know we can always count on God's help"²⁶.

The sacrificial nature of the Eucharist points to a deeper sacrificial dimension in the Eucharistic spirituality. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross cannot be separated from his life. In fact his sacrifice began with the first moment of his incarnation. St. Paul explains: "Though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in the human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2, 6-8). What exactly is the meaning of the words of Jesus: "Do this in commemoration of me"? Do they refer only to the events of a few hours beginning with Pilot's verdict and ending with Jesus' last breath on the cross? Every act of Christ had a propitiatory value before God, because of its inner orientation to the sacrifice on the cross. Karl Rahner explains: "For every moral action of Jesus had propitiatory value before God's justice, in so far as it was already interiorly incorporated into the totality of a life sacrifice whose climax was the voluntary sacrificial death on the cross and in so far as formed a single, great totality, with the death on the cross. Thus every action, every piece of work, every attitude of Jesus drew life from his readiness for the cross, was a part of the way up to the sacrificial altar of Calvary and thus was also pleasing to the Father. For this reason, this will to sacrifice was also included—when Jesus offered the first

25 Cf. *Ibid.*, n.9.

26 *Stay with us, Lord*, n.29.

Eucharistic sacrifice at the Last Supper and coupled with his command of the continuous renewal of this sacrifice by the Apostles and their successors also the interior will to sacrifice which sanctified all these visible sacrifices offered in his name in the course of time"²⁷.

On the day of ordination the bishop tells the priest (according to the Latin Rite) "*Agnosce quod agis, imitare quod tractabis, et vitam tuam mysterio dominicae crucis conforma*". If the hands, words and will of the priest are "direct instruments of Christ"²⁸, then his life cannot be separated from Christ's life. This means that the Eucharistic spirituality is rooted in the sacrificial life of the priests. What is said about the priest is true also with regard to all faithful, by virtue of their baptismal priesthood.

Vatican II asks the priests to "instruct the faithful to offer to God the Father the divine Victim in the sacrifice of the Mass, and to join to it the offering of their own lives"²⁹. In the Syro-Malabar Eucharistic celebration we pray, "Let us go to the Lord singing penitential hymns and offer our lives to him"³⁰. St. Paul tells that already at the beginning of Christian life that is in Baptism we participate in the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom. 6, 3ff). The Christian life becomes more perfect according the measure of our incorporation into Christ. The Eucharist is giving the Christian the deepest kind of incorporation into Christ. Jesus tells us, "Truly,

truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn. 6, 53f). This implies that the Eucharist makes us 'consanguineous' and 'con-corporeal' to Jesus Christ³¹.

The mystery of our incorporation into the life of Christ implies that we are invited to share in the principles of life and attitudes of Christ. The redemptive events in the life of Christ must continue through our life. Pope Pius XII explains this point very beautifully: "It is quite true that Christ is a priest; but he is a priest not for himself but for us, when in the name of the whole human race he offers our prayers and religious homage to the eternal Father; he is also a victim for us since he substitutes himself for sinful man. Now the exhortation of the Apostle: 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus', requires that all Christians should possess, as far as humanly possible, the same dispositions as those which the divine Redeemer had when he offered himself in sacrifice. That is to say, they should be in a humble attitude of mind, pay adoration, honour, praise and thanksgiving to the supreme majesty of God. Moreover, it means that they must assume to the same extent the character of a victim, that they deny themselves as the gospel commands, that freely and of their own accord they do penance and

27 Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, Vol. III, London, 1974, p. 162.

28 *Dominicae Cena*, n.11.

29 *The Ministry and the Life of Priests*, n. 5.

30 *Onisa de Rasa* of Lent.

31 G. Rouet de Journel, *Enchiridion Patristicum*, nn.843, 845.

that each detests and satisfies for his sins. It means, in a word, that we must all undergo with Christ a mystical death on the cross so that we can apply to ourselves the words of St. Paul, "With Christ I am nailed to the cross"³². Our offering cannot be confined merely to the liturgical sacrifice³³. St. Paul's words are very relevant here: "I appeal to you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship"(Rom. 12,1). This means that by baptism we are brought into the life circle of Jesus Christ. Christian living demands that we organize our life in an essentially sacrificial manner. That gives a trans-valuation for our daily life and activity. They become the concrete way of our sharing in the sacrificial will and self-surrender of Jesus Christ. In this way we lend our hands, feet, tongue and every atom of our existence to Christ, so that he may make his sacrifice visible and available for the faithful of today. We cannot remain merely as his "liturgists" with out entering into the sacrificial outlook of Christ, which gives value and dignity to the sacred action. Further when we consume the sacrificed body of Christ, it makes a mysterious transformation in us that we become conformed to him. "It is impossible that the mystery of suffering of Christ should not spread through the life of someone who partakes of the sacrifice and the sacrificial meal in which is renewed the memory of the suffering of Christ"³⁴. This

likeness to Christ must be above all in that of the life of Christ by which he is marked out—the crucified. "Just as it was so very much the characteristic sign of the life of Jesus that one really knows Christ only as the crucified (1Cor. 2,2), so the life of those who are united with Christ by grace must be marked by the cross. Conversely, all the sufferings of the Christian cannot be regarded by him as a natural misfortune or as the general lot of all human beings, but must be regarded simply as the consequence and expression of his Christian existence and of his union with Christ by grace, and as a necessary stage he must go through before being glorified with Christ... Thus it is a true calling to undergo suffering, following the example of Christ (1Pet. 2,20f), it is a partaking in *his* suffering and his grace (1Pet. 4,13; Heb. 13,3), it is a result of the law that all those who wish to live piously in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3,10). For if the author of our salvation attained perfection through suffering (Heb. 2,11; 5,8), can we who have put on this Jesus in Baptism (Gal.3, 27), think differently to perfection"³⁵. Hence, it is a profound truth suffering radically belongs to Christian life and it is a manifestation of his being in Christ by virtue especially of his sharing in the Eucharist. St. Paul says, "If we have died with him, we shall also live with him; if we endure, we shall also reign with him"(2 Tim. 2, 11f). "It is therefore a holy reality of faith" says Karl Rahner, " that the Holy Eucharist makes us partake in the suffering

32 *Mediator Dei*, n.81.

Cf.³³ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, Vol. III, London, 1974, p.162.

34 *Ibid.*, p.164.

35 *Ibid.*

of Christ, since it is the renewal of the sacrifice of Calvary, since it communicates Christ's grace, and since it is the sacrament of unity of the Body of Christ"³⁶.

Here we naturally meet with a problem: May be we remain a few moments in prayer after the Eucharistic communion. Then we leave this sphere of the sacred and enter into a world of profanity where God is absent. This secular profane 'everyday' must be seen as a gift given to us to live out the mystery of our incorporation into the life of Christ. The mystery of Incarnation gives this ultimate answer. Jesus accepted this same profanity, this secular everyday, the loneliness and darkness, the heart rending cry of "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" as a part of his sacrifice, which is sacramentally reenacted in the Eucharist. Rahner explains this: "When we receive the Lord in the Eucharist as him who died on the cross, then we receive the innermost governing factor of the everyday, because the crucified Lord in his cross and in his death only expresses in visible terms the lot that is imparted to us in the 'proximitas mortis' of everyday, as it were piecemeal and drop by drop, or as though we were gradually habituating ourselves to death by practicing it again and again"³⁷.

When we receive the Eucharist, we receive Christ's life as the innermost law of our spirituality. Therefore we receive all the realities of everyday as Christ had received

them. "If in this act of receiving Holy Communion we practice how to accept our everyday, then the everyday will be further projection of the Communion we receive into the reality of our lives,...if we do not make the everyday itself a means of receiving the grace of God by accepting it in the guise in which it is mercifully presented to us of the toilsome, the drab and the everyday, then basically speaking, our Communion will not have been brought to its full and true significance. For there is one point that we must never forget: Simply stated as abstract proposition of theology it is a truth of faith that the Christian, by every good work, by every act of faithfulness performed in the context of everyday, by every deed done in the grace of God in the everyday, grows in the same grace of God. By such acts performed in the everyday his eternal life itself develops, is advanced, is intensified and plunges deeper roots into the ultimate basis of his own being. The communion with God, in his grace, can itself truly grow in the context of everyday"³⁸. This deeper dimension of Eucharistic spirituality tells us "what we are suffering is simply a participation in the life of the one whom we receive daily as victim and grace and as the bond of love. It is absolutely true to say that if we have died with him, we will also live with him. We share every thing with him—both death and life—because we live in him through his Sacrament"³⁹.

(to be continued...)

³⁶ Ibid., p.170.

³⁷ *Theological Investigations*, Vol. VII, London, 11971, p. 219.

³⁸ Ibid., 224f.

³⁹ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, Vol. III, London, 1974, p.170.

THE APOSTLIC SUCCESSION OF THE CHURCH AND ECUMENISM

Sr. Unnatha S.I.C

The main difference between the theology of apostolic succession in the Catholic Church and in the protestant Church is concerning the unbroken line of handing over apostolic authority from the first apostles of Jesus. The Catholic Church wants to make sure that a bishop or a priest stands in unbroken succession with the apostles of Jesus. Therefore the validity of Episcopal consecration and priestly ordination is measured on two principles. The first principle is that there should be the unbroken continuation with the apostles. In other words, the ordinary minister should be able to establish that he is validly ordained by a minister who had unbroken succession from the apostle and the minister of that minister should be able to establish the same thing. It goes up to the first apostle of Jesus. Now a question may arise. Is it something magical? That is to say, is the ritual performed is enough for a valid consecration or ordination. The Catholic Church answers this question by adding another element in the requirements of a valid ordination. It is not simply mechanical. Validity of ordination does not depend on the outward ritual alone to make

it simply mechanical. There is another element, the intention of the minister. He should have the intention of doing what the Church does. If these two requirements are fulfilled, that is, the minister stands in an unbroken line with the apostles and has intention of doing what the Church does the ordination is considered to be valid. Now can we be sure that in every case of ordinations that have happened at the time of the apostles till date had both these requirements in their fullness and so they were consequently valid? But the Church was not unaware of the possibility of any of these requirements lacking in the services of ordination. In this context the Church brings in another point, namely the doctrine of *ecclesia supplet* i.e. the Church supplies whatever is lacking in a service of ordination (or any sacrament for that matter) will be supplied by the Church. In this context it is good to point to some of the events in history.

After Coonan Cross oath a section of the St. Thomas Christians broke away from Roman leadership and twelve priests consecrated a bishop for themselves. This is part of the history which can never be erased¹ This bishop consecrated by the priests was

1 Cf. X. Koodapuzha, *Bharathasabbacharithram*, OIRS, Kottayam, 1989, pp.366,367.

accepted as their spiritual leader by all the Thomas Christians at least for a few years, till the official intervention of Rome in the matters of Kerala Church. Two questions are asked about this consecration. One is whether it was an Episcopal consecration as such or simply a canonical empowering of the candidate (in this case Archdeacon Thomas) so that he might take decisions about canonical disputes like validity of marriage rights of parish priests and so on. The church historian, X.Koodapuzha seems to think that it was only a canonical empowering of the Arch deacon². Anyway the people accepted him as their bishop and only later when Rome intervened people realized that they have been cheated by the Archdacon and his supporters. What does it mean? A whole congregation could be cheated on a very important point of Christian faith. In other words people do not have any clear idea that a consecration of a bishop can not be performed by priests. The second point is the so called letter of Mar Ahathallah. One of the supporters of the Archdeacon produced a letter supposed to have been written by Mar Ahathallah, the rejected Eastern bishop who was not allowed to land in Kerala. According to this letter of Mar Ahathallah (in all possibility a forged letter) the priests were requested to consecrate the Archdeacon as bishop. The doctrinal question is "can a bishop give such an authority?" Is ordination (Episcopal or priestly) just an authorization or is it a real sacrament to be conferred through a definite liturgical ritual?

About this question also, it seems that the Kerala Christians had no definite vision. In this connection it is good to think of the idea of priesthood among the Jews in the OT. The common idea is that from among the twelve sons of Jacob the tribe of Levy was elected for the services in the Temple and from the tribe of Levi the family of Aaron was selected for the specifically priestly functions. This may be the way priestly and Levitical ministries were discharged in the beginning of the Jewish religion, in the Pre-monarchic period. (BC 1300-960). But this priestly line did not continue long. During the time of David Zadoke was made priest. This priesthood does not originate from the Levitical tribe or Aaronic family. In all probability Zadokite priesthood comes from the priestly family of Zadoke, a priest of the pagan temple of Jerusalem. But in 2Chronicles there is an attempt to connect the genealogy of Zadoke with the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron (2Cho 5:34; 24:3-6; 27:17). But "many scholars believe that this data of 1 Chronicles do not represent genuine traditions. They suggest that the inclusion of Zadoke in the Levite and Aaronite genealogies... must be an artificial connection established in a later period when the priesthood was identified exclusively with the family of Aron although it was in fact held by the Zadokites in the post exilic temple"³ (J. L McKenzie Dictionary of the Bible, London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1975 P. 946.) Will this information modify our concept of Apostolic

2 X. Koodapuzha, pp.367,368.

3 J.L.McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible*, London, Jeoffrey Chapman, 1975,p.946.

Succession? Any way we have to take into consideration some of the problems in this concept. After all there is the non- clarity of the concept among the Catholic themselves. The history connected with the coonon cross Oath and the events that followed it are fruits for this ignorance Secondly there is the OT history which does not show any rigid succession of priesthood from Aaron. And thirdly there is the protestant understanding which sees the Church as standing in apostolic succession rather than any leader of the Church. There is also a sort of confusion about the laity. In this the Protestants and the Catholics do not agree. This last point we will explore now.

THE PROTESTANT VISION OF APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION

According to the present protestant practice a minister receives authority through the laying on of hands by an existing minister. But they do not insist that there should be an unbroken line of succession from the apostles. Then how the ministering person is authorized to ordain another person? It should be understood against the background of protestant ecclesiology. Through faith and the ecclesial sacraments especially the sacrament of baptism, the Church (the community of faithful) stands in relationship with the apostolic Church. The validity of the Church does not depend on the unbroken succession of its ministers rather the Church as a community is taken together as remaining in relationship with the Church of Christ or the apostolic Church. Therefore every minister of that church has power to transmit his ministerial authorities to another person.

The main difference between the idea of the Catholic Church and protestant idea about succession may be summarized in this way. In the Catholic understanding succession is to and through the ministers or the bishops. In the protestant understanding succession is to the Church. If there is a believing community it is a Church. Because of its faith it is directly related to Christ. The whole Church or the whole community receives succession. From that community individuals (individual ministers) can hand over ministerial powers to others.

Both these positions have their positive and negative points. In the Catholic position the lay people are almost totally excluded from the line of succession. Their position is simply as receivers of the benefits of ministerial authority. They have no succession as such. In the protestant position also there is a serious problem. It is concerning the need of the laying on of hands. If a community of faithful just because of its faith without an unbroken chain of ministerial succession can claim to be a Church standing in relationship with Christ, why should its ministers impart the ministerial authority to other persons through the laying on of hands? If the Church has apostolic succession then is not every member of the Church equally sharers of this quality? Then what is the meaning of leadership in the Church? Who appoints someone in the leadership position and where does the leader receive his authority? Is it from Christ or from the Church? Anyway in the light of our ecumenical responsibility it is necessary that both the Catholic Church and protestant churches should come out with newer ways

of understanding and articulating apostolic succession.

In this article I am suggesting some new ways of thinking for the Catholic Church especially in the light of the new ecclesiology of Vat II. I point out this new possibility from the historical background of the Kerala Church. As I said earlier, the Catholic Church requirements for a valid ordination were not properly understood by the people nor were they strictly observed in the practice of the Church.

THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

According to Vat II by the very fact that a Catholic lay man/woman has received baptism, he/she stands in intimate relationship with Christ because baptism is incorporation into the mystery of Christ. As Saint Paul says in the letter to the Romans "do not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father; we walk in the newness of life". First of all according to Paul's understanding baptism is a baptism into Christ (*eis Christo*) and therefore it is a baptism into his death (*eis to...*). The use of *eis* (into) is specially to be noted. Baptism is going into the mystery of Christ. So there is a real incorporation and identification with Christ. That is why the council says that every baptized person becomes a priest as Jesus is a priest.

This priesthood which is common to all faithful is called royal priesthood and through this incorporation the faithful receive not only priesthood but also kingship and prophetic gift. This means that the whole Church is priestly kingly and prophetic. Now within the Church there are the ministers who received the ministerial priesthood. Is it something coming from outside the church or something given in and through the Church? Does priesthood (or episcopacy) stand over and above the Church or is it part of the constituents that make the Church. If priesthood is a quality of the Church can we say that in no circumstances and under no conditions the Church is able to appoint someone as its minister. In other words in a group of faithful with no priest/ bishop in its membership is it impossible for the group of faithful themselves appoint a person, one among themselves as the minister of the group? The present day understanding is that it is impossible.

In this regard a statement of the Council deserves special consideration. The council says, the laity are gathered together in the people of God and make up the body of Christ under one head. Who ever they are, they are called upon as living members to expend all their energy for the growth of the Church and its continuous sanctification. For this very energy is a gift of the creator and blessing of the redeemer.⁴

4 Lumen Gentium, no:33, Walter.M.Abbott, *The Documents of VatII*, Guild Press, NewYork, 1966, p.59.

What does the Church mean by saying "under one Head. Is it Jesus who is the head or the ecclesiastical head, i.e. the Pope or Bishop? According to the Pauline terminology when the Church is qualified by the symbol of body Christ is qualified as the head of that body". "But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love. (Eph 4:15, 16). If we understand the one head as Christ then the group of laity gathered together is itself the body of Christ. What is strange in this statement is that the council specifically says that it is the laity who are gathered together. That means the hierarchy is not included. In such a situation the inevitable question "is the laity by itself the body of Christ?" If the laity make up the body of Christ then the hierarchy is not necessary. The council also uses the phrase "in the people of God". What does it really mean? Does it mean as the people of God or does it mean the incorporation of the laity into an already existing people of God? From the fact that they "make up the body of Christ" it should be understood not us incorporation into an already existing people of God but as making up the people of God. In other words the "people of God" and "the body of Christ" are used synonymously. Any hierarchy may not be necessary to make a group of laity a people of God. Further the council says in connection

with the missionary obligation of the laity that "through their baptism and confirmation all are commissioned to that apostolate by the Lord himself."⁵

If it is a direct commissioning by the Lord himself what is the place of the hierarchy? If the laity makes up the Church and they are directly commissioned by God even presidency in the Eucharistic gathering can be held by the laity. Because the Eucharist makes the church and the Church makes the Eucharist. The church is the body of Christ as the Eucharist is the body of Christ. The gathering of the laity does not need anything from outside to make it a Church. In fact this idea has behind it the protestant idea that the Church itself has the apostolic succession.

These statements need to be studied in greater depth. But one thing is very clear. The mind of the Church as expressed in Vatican Council is moving towards the protestant position. There is a real confusion about the specific role of the laity. In a true sense the laity makes up the Church. At the same time they are dependent on the hierarchy. The way these two ideals can be harmoniously reconciled is a problem the council has not solved properly and this confusion opens a window to a new way of looking at the apostolic succession. This also shows that there is possibility of accepting the validity of protestant orders at least under certain circumstances even if we are not able to establish an unbroken continuation of succession from the apostles.

5 Ibid.

Will this information modify our concept of Apostolic Succession? Any way we have to take into consideration some of the problems in this concept. Above all there is non-clarity of the concept among the Catholics themselves. The history connected with the canon cross Oath and the events that followed it are fruits of this the ignorance. Secondly there is the OT history which does not show any rigid succession of priesthood from Aaron. And thirdly there is the protestant understanding which sees the Church as standing in Apostolic succession rather than any leader of the Church. There is also a sort of confusion about the position and right of the laity especially the women. This last point we will explore now.

In any discussion of ecumenism especially with the protestant Churches the position and role of women in the Church needs to be included. It is a fact that in the protestant churches women are, as men, raised to presbyteral and Episcopal orders. It was a very bold step taken by these Churches. This example was followed by the Anglican Church also without any delay. When we consider this new movement in these Churches two important points have to be kept in mind. The first one is the controversy it has generated in those Churches and their weakening in membership. All these churches which promoted women to sacred orders had to face very strong oppositions from a minority (sometime even a majority) of their members who were not able to come out of the

traditional understanding of presbyteral office. Secondly because of this particular movement many people left these Churches either by joining other Christian communities or by abandoning the Christian faith itself. It is well known to every body that hundreds of priests of Anglican Church embraced Catholicism just because of the movement of ordaining women in the Anglican Church. That way these Churches were weakened in their membership. The second point is the difference in the understanding of priesthood or ecclesial ministry for that matter. The protestant Churches do not have the idea of ecclesial ministry in which the minister is considered as standing in the place of Jesus Christ. But the Catholic position is different. First of all the Church understands the priest as the representative of Christ to the people. With the bishop the priest build up the Church of God. This is the continuation of the work which Jesus has done for the Church. They are to the Church in the position of parents to the children. As Vat II says, they have to "as fathers in Christ, take care of the faithful whom they have spiritually begotten by baptism and by their teaching".⁶ The council continues having become from the heart a pattern to the flock... let them so lead and serve the local community that it may worthily be called by that name by which the one entire people of God is distinguished, namely, the Church of God." Secondly the Church understands that the priest is incorporated into Christ almost becoming another Christ to the

6 *Lumen Gentium*, no: 28, Abbott, p.55.

people.⁷ Thirdly the Church understands also that the priest by ordination is incorporated into the Trinitarian dynamism.⁸

Fourthly the priest shares also in the spousal relationship of Jesus to the Church. In other words, according to the Pauline teaching the Church is both the body of Christ as well as his bride. A bride-bridegroom relationship (a spousal relationship) exists between the Church and Christ.

Be subject to one another out of reverence to Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the Church, the body of which he is the saviour. Just as the Church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the Church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and cares tenderly for it, just as Christ does for the Church, because we are members of the body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a great

mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the Church. Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband. (Eph 5:21-33)

This relationship becomes tangible and concrete in the relationship between the priest and the people. Therefore in a sense the priest is the bridegroom of the Church. This spousal dimension of the priest as pastor will help him “guide his community and each and every one of the members enlightening their consciences with the light of revealed truth, wisely guarding the evangelical authenticity of the Christian life, correcting errors, forgiving, curing the sick, consoling the afflicted and promoting fraternity.”⁹

All these are reasons which pull the Catholic Church back from any movement towards a positive understanding of the ordination of women. But there is another aspect to be considered here. That is in relation to the history of the Church, even the history of salvation; the salvation history which starts with the call of Abraham sometime in the 18th century BC is the beginning of the history of liberation of human beings. This history took a definitive form making man and woman equal to each other in the Christ event. Many are the new innovations in the programme of liberation started by Christ. For example in a society which considered the wife as just a property of her husband but also the man can not divorce his wife. Jesus stood for her equality with him. According to Jesus it is not

7 Cf, John Paul II, Post synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastor Dabo Vobis*, no:2.

8 Ibid.18.

9 Directory for the life and ministry of priests, VatII Congregation for the Clergy, 1994, p.58.

only the woman who can't divorce either divorce by the man or the woman is considered as adultery by Jesus (Mt 19:7-9). The *magnificat* of Mary (Lk 1:46-55) is another example of a woman leading a liberation movement. According to her God is one who has "brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly" and who "has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty" (Lk 1:52, 53). These words resound with the spirit of revolution not paralleled by anything in history of that time. In the early Church there were special consideration for women. From the New Testament (Acts 6:1, 9:39; James 1:27 1Thim 5:3-16) we come to understand that there were groups of widows protected by the Church. In the ancient world a woman could not be independent. She could exist only as a member of a family depending either on her father or her husband. The position of the widows was the most pitiable, especially if she has no grown up children. The widow has no one to defend herself. Just because she is a woman she was a victim of exploitation. But the early Church took care of them. By the time the letter to Timothy was written care of woman had received a well organized form. The author of the letter says, "Honor widows who are really widows If a widow has children or grandchildren they should first learn their religious duty to their own family and make some repayment to their parent, for this is pleasing in God's sight. The real widow left alone, has sent her hope on God and continues

in supplications and prayers night and day. (1 Tim 5:3-9). This practice is continued in the Church and is still continuing. The religious congregations for women are, to a certain extent, the modern form of the protection of women, though the members are not widows as in the early Church. But there are provisions in the Church for the protection of poor and abandoned women in the Church and also these outside the church.

But the Church can't feel a sense of complacency because the present day human society has a totally different view of woman. Today the thinking man does not look at the woman as one to be protected from exploitations and taken care of, but as one who strives to stand along with man and to work together with man in the building up of the church? This is a serious question and how much is she recognized for what she does in the up brining of the children of God. We have to face his question against the new status woman has been granted in the protestant churches and in the human society at large. What about the deaconesses who were an essential part of the ecclesial ministry in the early Church. In the *Didaskalia* we read even that you must honour the deaconesses as the image of the Holy Spirit"¹⁰ If the deaconesses are the image of the Holy Spirit how do we explain the disappearance of such a ministry in the present Church? Can the Church exist without the image of the Holy Spirit? At least in some of the early Churches the deaconesses

10 Quatted by Rene Van Eyden, "The place of Women in Liturgical Functions", *Concilium*, 2, 1972, p.74.

receive the stole and communion under both kinds after the imposition of hands".¹¹

I do not go into the reasons for the disappearance of this ministry. But one thing is true. The positive attitude which the Church showed to women has disappeared from the Church at some point of her history. The ordination of woman to priesthood may be having doctrinal and theological objections coming from the particular way in which the Catholic Church understands priesthood especially from the fact that Jesus was a male human being and priest is incorporated into the Christ-reality and also from the fact that the priest shares the spousal status of Jesus to the Church. But does the Church have no obligation to continue the positive liberative attitude it had in the early periods of its history. Should the Church not stand with the new consciousness about women in the human society as a whole? To be more concrete, should not woman be placed in responsible offices in the Church? To put it in another way, is it essential that priesthood and administrative offices should be so closely related and identified as it happens in the present day Church. If the catholic Church is able to think in a new way and seek the Co-operation of women in all the fields of its activities, where it is possible to seek the help and co-operation of woman, it would be a long step towards better relationship with the protestant Churches and it will pave new ways for inter Church dialogue.

Conclusion

One of the main bone of contention between the Catholics and Protestants is the question of apostolic succession. The Catholic position is almost totally agreed upon by the Eastern Churches. The main point in this idea is that apostolic succession exists in the Church through the imposition of hands in the sacrament of Episcopal ordination and priesthood. The Church believes that this line of succession exists in the Church without any break in any period of history. But the protestant emphasis is not on the imposition of hands but on authorization by the Church, because apostolic succession is understood as a quality of the Church than of the leaders of the Church. In the history of the Church of St. Thomas of Kerala there is clear evidence about the non-clarity of apostolic succession. In the Old Testament though priesthood is directly connected with the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron there is evidence for the inclusion of others into priesthood especially from the time of David. These are all reasons compelling us to look into apostolic succession from a new point of view than the rigid and to a great extent physical understanding according to which an unbroken line of imposition of hands is that which links a minister with the apostles. The Constitution on the Church of Vat II (*Lumen Gentium*) is an added reason for a revised idea of apostolic succession. For it understands the gathering of the laity as the people of God and as the

¹¹ Ibid.

Church. The position of the hierarchy is not at all mentioned. In the light of all these innovations if we are able to arrive at a new idea which is friendlier with the protestant brethren it will take us a long way in our relationship with the protestant.

It should be remembered that in the Gospel of John, Jesus is authorizing his disciples and not apostles to continue his mission. Jesus says, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me so I send you. When he had said this he breathed on them and said to them 'receive the Holy Spirit'. If you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven them. If you retain the sins of any they are retained..." (Jn 20:21,23). Jesus speaks it not to the twelve but to the disciples. But who are the disciples in John? There is no distinction

between apostles and disciples in the gospel of John. To be more precise all the followers of Jesus are his disciples. There is no division of the disciples into apostles and non-apostles. The very word apostle is absent in the Gospel. Are we able to think of apostolic succession from discipleship rather than from apostleship? It is not easy to come out with a new understanding of apostolic succession. But there is the challenge and we should face the challenge. Let us also be reminded of the recent words of Pope Benedict on ecumenism which he gave in his address to a delegation of the Mennonite world conference. The Pope said, "our continuing search for unity of the Lord's disciples is of utmost importance. Our witness will remain impaired as long as the world sees our division".¹²



12 L' osservatore Romano, N.44, 31 October, 2007, p.5.

THE MODERN VISION OF MAN AND ECUMENISM

Raju Parukoor

Introduction

What do we have to say about collaboration and unity among the Christian churches in view of the new understanding of man? This is the question I would like to tackle in this essay. We had in the past a static understanding of man, as if man is a finished product created by God and sent into the world to discharge certain duties assigned by God and then to receive the reward for his action depending on the way he has performed his duty. But this understanding has a big weakness. The weakness is concerning the responsibility of man in bringing the whole creation into perfection. Is man simply a passive worker of certain pre-planned design of God or has he a part in the very planning about the future of the world? Revelation impels us to think in the second way, as one who is responsible in the very planning about the future of the world. The creation account tells us that after creating man God said "let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth (Gen 1:26). Further in the same creation account we read about a command that God gives to the first human being. It reads, "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." (Gen 1:28)

According to this text man is not simply to do certain pre-assigned duties but has the responsibility of designing the future of the world. The modern philosophy also gives us a similar idea about man. This insight, if taken in its full sense and brought to its natural conclusions, will contribute a lot towards Ecumenism. This is what we want to see in this article.

1. Modern Philosophy

The phrase *modern philosophy* is used in a technical sense in the philosophical circles, distinguishing between modern and contemporary. But in this article the phrase is used for a few of the prominent philosophies of the first half of the 20th century. We will take just four of the most influential philosophers - Julian Huxley, Teilhard De Chardin, Soren Kierkegaard and Martin Buber. One may ask why these people are selected. Only Chardin is the Catholic among them, and only Kierkegaard and Chardin showed any faith in Christianity. Then what is the importance of others? In religious affiliation and expressed faith they differ a lot. But all of them are known as existentialist philosophers.

Their methodology in philosophy is something unique and vastly different from those of the Greek thinkers or the scholastics who were responsible for Christian categories of thinking. These 20th century philosophers, it seems to me, philosophized out of sheer

need to do that: They were not the so called armchair philosophers. They were challenged in their being by the question of the meaning of man. In fact in all of them philosophy can be reduced to anthropology. Their main question is "what am I?" or "what is man?" And this concern made them look deep into the reality of man and come out with new understandings of that reality. There is another reason for selecting these persons for our study. In smaller or greater measure; all these people have influenced the Christian theology of the 20th century, both protestant and catholic. In that sense, at least to some extent Christian theologians are at home with these thinkers. This situation creates a friendly background for discussing ecumenism.

1.1. Julian Huxley

Huxley was a scientist and philosopher at the same time. He has written books on science and philosophy. He was a scientific philosopher i.e. one who philosophized from his insights about modern science. The branch of science which he specialized was biology. For sometime he was a professor of zoology in Kings College London and held the post of secretary of the zoological society of London. He has also served as director general of UNESCO. As said above he was a person who philosophized from his knowledge of science and he has delivered a lot of lectures in and around England and America.

As a biologist he was impressed by the theory of evolution. But he understood it in his own way and contributed a lot for the development of the theory. He speaks of evolution as taking place in three levels. Evolution is a process but this process

happens in three levels. The first may be called the cosmic level of evolution. This is an evolution of the world in its physical and cosmic level. In other words there is an inward maturing in the complexity in the physical and chemical reality of world. This happens through the combination of the realities and the new forms they taken. But it is a very slow process.

The second one is the biological level of evolution. This is known as evolution proper. Darwin speaks only about this level of evolution. His concern was to show how from the inanimate chemical substances the first living organism was formed and how from the first living organism more complex and complicated organisms were formed to reach the most developed form of life — the human life. Huxley also speaks about this level of evolution. He does not limit this type of evolution on the earth alone. He is ready to grant that similar evolutions may be happening in other planets elsewhere in the cosmos. The process of biological evolution proceeds by self reproduction and self variation. Both these are important. By self reproduction it meant the continuation and multiplication of each species of the living beings. But in evolution this is not all that happens; as each species increase and multiply there is also variation happening. It is because of the variation that new species emerge. It is because of the variation that we can speak of a progress in evolution rather than a simple reproduction or repetition. This level of evolution is also a slow process. It takes millions of years to produce a new species which is visibly different from the pre-existing species.

For Huxley the most important level of evolution is not the cosmic or biological but the third level which he calls the psycho-social evolution. This also happens through a process of self production and self-variation. But it is an evolution that happens in the mind and not in the matter.¹

In the psycho-social evolution Huxley finds a progress. But what is meant by progress? Usually when we speak of progress we have a goal in view. We say something is progressing in terms of its advances towards the goal. But Huxley does not speak of such a fixed goal. He measures not from the un-reached goal rather from the previous stage from which the evolution proceeds. In other words Huxley understands that in the process of psycho-social evolution there is more and more complexity and organization. In comparison to the complexity and organization of the previous step every new step is a progress. In his own words;

But given the present state of human race, its thirst for knowledge and betterment and the extend of its accumulated tradition I regarded as certain that some degree of progress will for sometime inevitably continue to occur.²

This psycho-social evolution is the evolution that happens in man and therefore man has to consciously involve himself in the

process of this psycho-social evolution. In other words it is not a blind process thrust upon man but a process in which man's co-operation is needed. In one place Huxley writes:

The most important of all the pre-requisites for the future progress is the acceptance of the fact of progress and the understanding of its nature: for we cannot expect to achieve what we do not believe in.³

This psycho social evolution in which man has consciously to co-operate is designated as noetic. The word includes all kinds of human experiences. In other words it is not simply the intellectual aspect of human evolution i.e. but imaginal, emotional, mystical, aesthetical and so on. The progress is in all these fields. To put it in his own words;

Man's evolution is not biological but psycho-social, it operate by the mechanism of cultural tradition, which involves the cumulative self reproduction and self variation of mental activities and their products.⁴

This progressive evolution has a characteristic difference from other levels of evolution. It is not a blind progress to an unknown destiny rather it is a progress towards an end. The nature of that end is not very clear in Huxley's view. But one thing is clear. The progress is towards more and more

1 Teilhard Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, London, Fontana Books, 1965, p.31.

2 Ibid. p. 32.

3 Ibid. p. 11.

4 Teilhard Chardin, *The Heart of Matter*, (tr) Rene Hague, New York, Harcourt Brace & Co., 1976, pp. 133-134.

harmony and symphony in human culture. There is an inter-communicating of human beings in the process of human evolution. To quote his own words culture is; a self maintaining system or organization of inter-communicating human beings and their products; or if we wished to be a little more precise, of the results of the inter-communication of the minds of human individuals in the society.⁵

According to Huxley then the result of third level of evolution which is a noetic evolution there is a growth in intercommunication of the mind of the humans in the society. In other words Huxley understands that the human society is heading forward to a state of inter-communication. We will take up this idea later connected with ecumenism

1.2. Teilhard De Chardin

One of the most controversial figures of the 20th century was Teilhard De Chardin – a French Jesuit priest of the Catholic Church. He was born in 1881 and after a busy career as a priest, scientist and theologian died in the year 1955. During his life time he was not properly understood by his contemporaries. Some people even thought of him as a heretic because of his stand with regard to the evolution of the world. It was a time when the church was not ready to accept the theory of evolution. Chardin on his part accepted the theory in principle and gave it a new

direction. He explained all the Christian doctrines within the ambit of the theory of evolution. He was a friend of Julian Huxley and held close parallelism with him in his explication of evolution.

As a catholic faithful and priest he had to uphold the faith of the Church. But as a scientist he could read in nature the sure signs of the facts of evolution. To reconcile these two was not an easy thing; but he did in fact reconcile. His most famous book is *the Phenomenon of Man*. About that book he wrote in the preface;

If this book is to be properly understood it must be read not as a work on metaphysics, still less as a sort of theological essay, but purely and simply as a scientific treatise. The title itself indicates that the book deals with man solely as a phenomenon; but it also deals with the whole phenomenon of man.⁶

The characteristic beauty of this book is that while treating pure science it gives out profound theological vision about man, nature, Christ and God. Another point he makes in the preface is that he was convinced about the inter-connectivity of whole beings. He says, “during the last 50 years or so the investigation of science has proved beyond all doubts that there is no fact which exist in pure isolation, but that every experience, however objective it may seem, inevitably becomes enveloped in

5 Teilhard Chardin, *The Future of Man*, London, Harper & Row, 1964, p.132.

6 Teilhard Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, Op. Cit. p. 14.

a complex of assumptions as soon as the scientists attempt to explicit in a formula.”⁷

In the introduction to the book Julian Huxley wrote, “*the Phenomenon of Man* is a very remarkable work by a very remarkable human being ... In *the Phenomenon of Man* he has effected a tree fold synthesis – of the material and physical world with the world of mind and spirit; of the past with the future; and of variety with unity; the many with the one.”⁸

Another remarkable work of Chardin is *the Divine Milieu*. This book is more theological and spiritual. Through the pages of the book we can see the heart of a saintly catholic priest throbbing with love for the whole cosmos. *Activation of Energy, Christianity and Evolution, Human Energy, Towards the Future, the Heart of Matter* etc. are the most prominent among the writings of Chardin. It is impossible to separate the scientist from the priest in Chardin. In *the Heart of Matter* he writes; It is to your body in this its fullest extension – that is to the world become through your power and my faith the glorious living crucible in which every thing melts away in order to be born anew; it is to this that I dedicate myself with all the resources which your creative magnetism has brought forth in me.⁹

Another thing noticeable in Chardin is that he gives more importance to the last stage

of evolution which he calls evolution in the noosphere. By this term he means the ongoing concentration and complexity and sophistication by which man constantly proceeds to his goal which is becoming the superman. He says;

What is really going on under cover and in the form of human collectivization, in the super organization of matter upon itself which as it continues to advance proceeds its habitual specific effect, the further liberation of consciousness.¹⁰

Huxley Speaks about a particular terminology which appears over and over again in Chardin’s *Phenomenon of Man*. It is the word ‘convergence’. It shows Chardin’s hope of union and integration of all realities. Already we are heading forward to this integration. It needs to be further developed and brought to perfection. Huxley says about Chardin;

“He usually uses ‘convergence’ to denote the tendency of mankind during its evolution to super pause centripetal and centrifugal trends, so as to prevent centrifugal differentiation from leading to fragmentation and eventually to incorporate the results of differentiation in an organized and unified patterns.”¹¹

7 Teilhard Chardin, *The Heart of Matter*, Op. Cit., p. 82.

8 Soren Kierkegaard, *The Point of View*, London, Harper Torch Book, 1962, p. 112.

9 Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, London, Kegan Paul etc. & Co., 1947, p. 133.

10 Vat. II, Ecumenism, No. 1, as given in W.M. Abbott, *The Document of Vatican II*, New York, Guild Press, 1966, pp. 341-342

11 Edith Stein, *Life in a Jewish Family* (1891-1916), (tr) J. Coeppel, Washington DC, ICS Publications, 1986, p.158.

In *the Heart of Matter* he wrote just two months before his death; On one side there was a flux, at once physical and psychic, which made the Totality of the Stuff of things fold in on itself, by giving of complexity; carrying this to the point where that stuff is made to co-reflect itself... On the other side under the species of an incarnate divine being, a presence so intimate that it could not satisfy itself or satisfy me, without being by nature universal. This was the double presentation, intellectual and emotional of a *cosmic convergence* and *Christic emergence* which, each in its own way filled my whole horizon.¹²

It is now clear that Chardin viewed the direction of evolution as moving towards unification and integration and finally to Christification. According to him, only through unification human kind and cosmos at last become really *Christian*.

1.3. Soren Kierkegaard

Kierkegaard was a Danish thinker. He is one of the main contributors to the branch of philosophy known as existentialism. In his life we see three stages of growth. In his boyhood he was leading a normal religious life. His family itself was rooted in religious tradition, the protestant form of it. His father was an exceptionally pious Christian. It was in this situation that he was brought up. We may term it as the first stage in his personal life. As he grew up into a young man his ideas changed and he became a critique of religion. During his university education he was among the most irreligious group of students. This is

the second stage. But this situation did not continue for long. As he enters the third stage of his life in his late twenties we see a total change in his attitude and opinion. We do not know what are the external causes for this change. There may be the influence of some religious minded friends or teachers who brought about the change in him. To speak from his personal role and responsibility in this stage we can say it is his serious reading and reflection which brought about the change. As a result of this change he got reconciled with his father and started to give expression to his new vision by serious philosophical and theological writings. We will just summarize the main directions of his thoughts. At the outset we should keep in mind that his terminology is not to be confused with the terms used by his contemporaries or by the scholastic philosophers.

Kierkegaard is a serious thinker about the human life. According to him man has not become fully man. To be a man he has to become an individual. The use of the term individual has created some confusion in the minds of some of Kierkegaard's readers and students. They have misunderstood the philosopher as supporting individualism. But the fact is just opposite of it. Kierkegaard's understanding of the individual is not easy to be explained in words. It is a vision the philosopher had about himself and about every other human being. An individual is a responsible person who consciously exists and is proud of his existence. He is distinct from anything and everything in the world, but

12 Edith Stein, *Life in a Jewish Family* (1891-1916), (tr) J. Coeppel, Washington DC, ICS Publications, 1986, p.158.

related to them in an authentic way. In other words one who leads an authentic human life is an individual. Since people do not live as authentic individuals, Kierkegaard says that man does not truly exist. In this regard two important concepts need to be explored and explained. Kierkegaard very often uses the term 'spectator'. Who is a spectator? One who does not get involved meaningfully and authentically into the web of existence is a spectator. He stands away from the main stream of life of the society. He only stands aside and looks at the revolving universe. He has nothing to contribute to accelerate the movement of life. Neither is he interested in contributing anything. It is a sad detachment from the world. Though they do not get involved in the movement of life they are affected by it. That is to say though they do not do anything as a subject in the constant movement of life they are affected by the same movement as an object is affected. To put it in other way to be a spectator means to be not being a subject and being a mere object.

A second term to be considered in this regard is the term 'crowd'. Kierkegaard is vehemently opposed to the term crowd. It is because the crowd is an enemy of the individual. To put it in his own words;

A crowd in its very concept is the untruth by reason of the fact that it renders the individual completely impenitent and irresponsible or at least weakens his sense of responsibility by reducing it to a fraction¹³.

So according to him the influence of the crowd is such that the individual is lost in the crowd. This is the ruin of humanity itself. Therefore the individual is to be saved from the crowd. Soren Kierkegaard develops his ideas within the milieu of Christianity. It is as a Christian and as a serious Christian thinker that he put forward his ideas of man. To be a Christian one has to believe the truths and to love. For truth and love one should be ready to suffer voluntarily. He refers to the martyrs of the early church. They were all better Christian than the present day Christians. They offered themselves to be tormented by the enemies because they believed and loved. Believe and love cannot be divorced from each other. They go together and when they are found together in a person we can call him as a Christian.

Was Kierkegaard himself a Christian? He never admitted that he is a Christian. It is because he knew that Christianity is not easy. He even says that to be a Christian is too much for us. Therefore he never claimed to be a Christian. At the same time towards the end of his life he thought of himself as a person in the process of becoming a Christian.

When we evaluate Kierkegaard the ideas which strike us very deeply is the question of becoming a Christian. Belief and love are the two factors which make a man Christian. Where these two are lacking or where these two do not co-exist harmoniously there is no Christian.

13 Soren Kierkegaard, *The Point of View*, London, Harper Torch Book, 1962, p. 112.

1.4. Martin Buber

All the previous thinkers we examined were Christian thinkers though all of them were not practicing Christians. Now we go to a Jewish philosopher. His name is Martin Buber. Though he was a Jew his influence on Christianity is much deeper and extensive than many of the Christian thinkers of the 20th century.

He was born in 1878 and after a long period of active life he died in 1965. Though he was a Jew his research paper in the university was on Christian mysticism. During the time of the Nazi torture of the Jews he helped many Jews to remain faithful to their religion and to be consoled by faith. Perhaps the most important work of Martin Buber is *I & Thou*. We will depend mostly on this book for the following summery of his philosophy.

There are two attitudes in man. One is the I-It attitude. This is the most in-human attitude. It is an attitude in which a person encounters another person not as a person but as a thing. He reduces the other into a mere object or a mere thing. There is another attitude which is called I-Thou attitude. In this attitude a person relates with another person as a subject relating with another subject. Here both are subjects. Therefore none of them is lower or higher than the other. A sort of equality is generated by this attitude. In this relationship there is no question of using the other but in the I-It relationship the 'I' uses 'It'. In the I-Thou relationship there is a possibility of dialogue. According to Buber man in his

essence is a dialoging being. We have the old idea that man is a rational animal and the recent idea that man is a social being. Rejecting both these ideas Buber understands him as a dialoging being. Through dialoging a community is formed, a community of love and fellowship. Buber says;

The primary aspiration of all history is a genuine community of human beings – genuine because it is a community all through. A community that failed to base itself on actual and communal life of big and little groups living and working together ... would be fictitious and counterfeit. Hence everything depends on whether the collectivity into whose hands the control of the means of production passes will facilitate and promote in its very structure and in all its institutions the genuine common life of the various groups¹⁴.

2. Applying to Ecumenism

The present situation of the churches is one of mutual enmity and division. But this situation cannot represent the genuine nature of man nor his aspiration. All the philosophers we have examined speak about unification and integration of all realities and in particular the human society. The deepest thirst in man is not to drift away from others, not to be an island unrelated to the surroundings but to be integrated to other creatures and the fellow humans in particular. The aim of evolution is not disintegration but unification. According to the philosophers we have examined there is a definite direction in the movement of

14 Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, London, Kegan Paul etc. & Co. , 1947, p. 133.

evolution. Huxley in particular says that man is progressing. Progress is measured on the basis of integration. Though the terms used are different all of these philosophers have a vision of a unified humanity in the future. This unified humanity according to Chardin is heading towards the superman, the Christ. There is only one direction in which the human can move and that is the direction of union of all beings. If these philosophers and visionaries are true in their teaching, then we have to say that any movement against integration is an in-human movement and a movement against the divine plan. Can the churches encourage any movement which is inhuman? The only possibility for the churches and for their members is to move in the direction in which the cosmic spirit is moving. The deepest aspiration of man is moving towards integration. Therefore unity of the churches is not a concession, but only an inevitable duty for the Christian to be truly human and Christian.

Today there is an awareness of the evil of division and a thirst for union. The Vatican Council says;

Nevertheless the Lord of ages wisely and patiently follows out the plan of His grace on behalf of us, sinners. In recent times He has begun to bestow more generously upon divided Christians remorse over their divisions and longing for unity¹⁵.

This remorse over division and longing for unity are in fact signs of the real nature of man apart from the movement of the divine spirit and its prompting. The human nature by itself longs to be united. Therefore to be human in any real sense we have no choice than to work for unity.

Some times the churches claim that division is the inevitable consequence of standing for the correct doctrine. In this regard it would be important to speak of the insights of the greatest woman intellectual of the last century – Edith Stein. Her life as a Jew and her conversion to Catholicism and her martyrdom at the hands of the Nazi people are known to the public. Later Pope John Paul II was impressed by the heroic virtue in her and canonized her as a saint of the universal Church. In the last century there was no name of a woman comparable with Edith Stein. She says human person is a real unity and harmonious synthesis. She stands for truth. But truth and love are identical in Edith Stein's vision. In other words Edith Stein makes an identification of truth and love. She admonishes, "do not accept anything as truth if it lacks love and do not accept anything as love which lacks truth. One without the other cannot exist."¹⁶

The churches which justify division on the pretext of standing for truth must know that truth and love can never be divorced. As they stand for truth they also have a duty to

15 Vat. II, Ecumenism, No. 1, as given in W.M. Abbott, *The Document of Vatican II*, New York, Guild Press, 1966, pp. 341-342

16 Edith Stein, *Life in a Jewish Family* (1891-1916), (tr) J. Coeppel, Washington DC, ICS Publications, 1986, p.158.

recognize that truth is love and nothing is truth without love.

Conclusion

In this article we have been traveling through the insights of some of the most famous philosophers of the last century. These people were all fervent enquirers into the ultimate truth of man. What is man? What makes his life meaningful? What is the innermost reality of man? All of them without any difference proclaimed that in the deepest recess of human reality there is the unquenchable thirst for unity and integration. Whatever works against unity and integration is not genuinely human and Christian. They all say that truth cannot be divorced from love. Therefore the churches have a duty to love one another and get united as the one true Church of God.

Let us conclude these thoughts by pointing to God's complaint to the Church of Ephesus. God says, "I know that you are enduring patiently and bearing up for the sake

of my name and that you have not grown weary. But I have this against you that you have abandoned the love you had at first" (Rev. 2:34)

Why God has a complaint against a church which is enduring? Why did this Church abandon its first love? The scholarly answer is that in the course of fighting for the true doctrines the Church grew weaker and weaker in its love towards others. This is a temptation which continues to haunt the traditional churches. Upholding truth they abandoned love thinking that truth and love can be divorced. But the word of God says that they exist together and that we are not able to hold on to one if the other is discarded. In other words a church which has abandoned love has lost truth also. The correct doctrine exists only in a society in which true love exists. If there is true love no one can separate the churches. Developing our inmost nature - that is the way for speedy ecumenism. Be truly human, you will be truly Christian and be truly Christian and all divisions among the churches will vanish.



NEWS

New Cardinal: Archbishop of Bombay Oswald Gracias

Pope Benedict XVI created 23 new cardinals during a solemn Ordinary Public Consistory held on Saturday, Nov. 24 in the Vatican. Archbishop of Bombay Oswald Gracias was the only person from Asia to be made cardinal this time. The new cardinals belong to Italy, India, Argentina, the US, Germany, Poland, Spain, Ireland, Iraq, France, Senegal, Mexico, Brazil and Kenya.

Bishop Dabre Made Member Of Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue

Pope Benedict XVI has appointed Bishop of Vasai Thomas Dabre as member of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue. Bishop Dabre is presently the chairman of the CBCI Doctrinal Commission and has been much involved in promoting interreligious dialogue, both at the local and national levels. The newly appointed members are: Archbishops Leonardo Sandri, prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, and Gianfranco Ravasi, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture; and Bishops Thomas Dabre of Vasai, India; Hyginus Kim Hee-joong, auxiliary of Kwangju, Korea, and Christopher Charles Prowse, auxiliary of Melbourne, Australia.

Fr. Cherian Kanjirakompil, appointed as Procurator of the Major Archbishop at the Vatican

For the first time in the history of the Syro-Malabar Church, a Procurator is appointed to represent the Major Archbishop and his Synod at the Apostolic See in the Vatican. On 2 November 2007, the Major Archbishop, having obtained the prior assent of the Pope, Benedict XVI, appointed Very Rev. Fr. Cherian Kanjirakompil, Procurator of the Major Archbishop to represent him at the different dicasteries of the Apostolic See. CCEO c. 61 provides for the appointment of such a Procurator. The Procurator will act as a sort of ambassador of the Major Archbishop at the Vatican ensuring effective communication between the Pope and the Syro-Malabar Church. Fr. Cherian Kanjirakompil is a priest of the eparchy of Kothamangalam and at present is the parish priest of the Cathedral parish. He has a doctorate in Sacred Scripture from the Biblical Institute, Rome. Before his appointment as the Cathedral Parish Priest, he was the Rector of the St. Joseph Pontifical Seminary, Mangalapuzha, Aluva.

Kerala Bishops Declare 2008 as Year of the Word of God

In view of the Bishops' Synod on the Word of God which is scheduled to be held in October 2008, the Catholic Church in Kerala will observe 2008 as the Year of the Word of God. The Kerala Catholic Bishop's Council (KCBC) announced the decision after the meeting of the Bishops held on June 6-7 at the Pastoral Orientation Centre (POC), Kochi. "The faithful can reflect on the source of their faith and they can come closer to Jesus through the Word of God", stated the President of KCBC, Bishop Mar George Punnakkotttil. "The Church considers this as an opportune time for those who ask for meaning of their life and search solution for their varied problems of daily life. Their search must not remain unsuccessful, because in the Bible, we find tested and dependable words of life. In order to achieve these goals, Bible should move from its place in the old book cupboard to the workshop of daily life. Each and everyone should lead a life based on the Word of God," Bishops affirmed. "The Year of the Word of God is a strong means to make an active life based on the values of the Bible", said Archbishop of Trivandrum and chairman KCBC Bible Commission Soosai Pakkiam.



Procurator of the Major Archbishop of the Vatican

For the first time in the history of the Holy See, the Procurator of the Major Archbishop of the Vatican, Cardinal Giovanni D'Ercole, has been appointed to the position of Procurator of the Major Archbishop of the Vatican. This appointment is a significant step in the restructuring of the Holy See's administration. The Procurator of the Major Archbishop of the Vatican is a high-ranking official who represents the Holy See in the Vatican City. He is responsible for the legal and administrative affairs of the Holy See. The appointment of Cardinal D'Ercole to this position is a testament to his long and distinguished career in the Holy See. He has served in various capacities, including as a member of the Roman Rota and as a member of the Congregation for the Clergy. His appointment to the position of Procurator of the Major Archbishop of the Vatican is a recognition of his expertise and his commitment to the service of the Holy See.

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All Correspondence to

The Managing Editor
Christian Orient, P.B. No. 1
Kottayam 686 010, Kerala
Ph. 0481-2571809, 5271807
E-mail: christorient@yahoo.co.in
Web Page Address: www.oirsi.com